background.

"Young people looking for a career and saying, 'Yuck, look at the farm economy' should look again. Agriculture is still a very possible career and can be a very lucrative one," she says. "It certainly is challenging, and no two days are alike. One day I might be called on to do some veterinary work, and the next it'll be computer analysis. It keeps changing."

Some have found a career in agriculture and others have used their degree as a springboard to other fields. Their titles may be doctor, lawyer, marketer or editor, but they are "today's aggie." Today's education in agriculture is a stepping stone into

many fields.

"Aggies"

Stanley C. Ernst, associate
Extension editor, Agriculture,
Office of Information and Applied
Communications, and Kenneth W.
Reisch, associate dean, College of
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griculture students of the 1980's aren't the stereotypic "aggies" of the past. Farming, for the most part, is not the vocation they are studying. More of these students are using their degrees to enter fields not usually associated with agriculture. And today's students are more often the cream of the crop. Agriculture attracts top high school scholars, leadership award winners, students who aspire to medical degrees, and individuals from many different walks of life

Amelia and Mark Besola are an answer to any argument that agriculture does not attract the top students. This brother and sister were both among the State of Washington's top high school scholars and consequently named Freshmen of the Year at Washington State University (WSU).

Amy Besola is described by her advisers as "an outstanding intellect and leader who is at ease as a woman in a nontraditional setting and maintains excellent relationships with peers, faculty and staff." She was one of two students in her State to receive a Century Three Leadership Scholarship and holds both a Washington State Merit Scholarship and a Seattle First Merit Scholarship. The WSU junior is simultaneously enrolled in the College of Veterinary Medicine and as a general agriculture major in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics.

Miss Besola's accomplishments as an active student include reaching the highest levels of distinction in Al-



Amelia and Mark Besola, both students of veterinary medicine, aspire to different careers—Amelia's interest is agriculture and Mark's is preservation of endangered species.

pha Zeta. She currently serves on the honorary's national board of directors and was the top National Alpha Zeta Scholar. She is also one of five students currently serving in the Leadership and Academic Development Program of Alpha Zeta. At WSU, Miss Besola has served in the college senate and was one of the students responsible for developing the organization's original charter and constitution. She maintains this high level of involvement while holding a 3.97 grade average (of a 4.0 total).

Some students of this caliber would consider moving away from an industry with the problems agriculture is reported to have. But rather than being discouraged, Amy sees a challenge and notes the demand for welleducated people in agriculture. And while she sees herself in a rural veterinary practice, that one-on-one transfer of research to grass-roots farming is critical to continuing the consumers' food supply, she says.

"Agriculture is still our future," she says. "It's a lot more than the cowsand-plows scenario we see portrayed so often. It's high technology and innovation, and we need intelligent people in the industry to help take

advantage of those resources. I'd rather be part of the solution and help us do a better job of feeding the world than sit around and talk about how bad things are."

Younger brother Mark could be accused of following in Amy's footsteps. The sophomore animal science major has been accepted to the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine and plans to carry a major in general agriculture at the same time. He also excels as a student, according to his advisers. Mark also is a Washington State Scholar and a WSU Distinguished Scholar as well as western region winner of a Purina scholarship. Like Amy, he is active as a student senator and as a College Ambassador, recruiting students for the College of Agriculture and Home Economics.

But when it comes to career goals, the similarities cease. True, both are studying veterinary medicine, but graduation from veterinary school is still 4 years away for Mark, and he wants to keep his options open. He considers all areas of veterinary medicine to be both challenging and worthwhile but is leaning toward working in a zoo or wild animal park environment.

"I think the challenge of preserving endangered species is great and there needs to be more done in that area," he says. "After working in a Smithsonian program at The National Zoo last summer, I decided that a career working with exotic species might be for me. We have a lot of research on domestic animals. Now those concepts in such areas as nutrition and reproduction need to be adapted to preserve diversity in the animal kingdom."

The younger Besola agrees with his sister that a degree in agriculture was a good move for them. And he also says the dim picture painted of the industry's economy should not discourage students from studying its individual disciplines. There are so

many ways agriculture degrees can be applied, he says, that quality people with expertise in those disciplines will continue to be in demand

Four years as an undergraduate can change goals and redirect careers. When Jerry Boley entered The Ohio State University in 1982, he was very interested in science and interested in agriculture. His plan was to earn a degree in animal science, go on to veterinary school, and go back to western Ohio to establish a rural practice while helping manage and expand his family's swine operation.

Now a senior nutrition major in the Department of Animal Science, the former high school valedictorian has a different plan. Boley excelled in Ohio State's honors program, achieving near perfect grades, and has been accepted to four medical colleges across the country.

What changed Jerry's direction? He says he did not feel stimulated enough by early courses in livestock production to make a career in that area. A nutrition course got him to thinking about medicine for both animals and people. And a summer job in a community hospital back home convinced him which way to go.

But the Ohio State senior doesn't see medicine as a way out of agriculture or rural life. In fact, he believes his upbringing and education will help him achieve the thorough understanding of people that he says doctors must have to be effective. Boley may even end up putting that knowledge to direct use.

"I can't pick what area I'll specialize in right now," he says. "But if I had to, it would probably be family practice in a rural area. I think oftentimes doctors coming into that type of situation don't know how to relate to it, and neither they nor their patients receive the best of the situation. I think my knowledge of that lifestyle would be a real help and I could feel comfortable in that situation also."



Jerry Boley's agricultural education led to an interest in medicine; after medical school he may go into family practice in a rural area.

Feeling comfortable with where you are is critical. And although you can't overlook the problems in the farm economy, diversity and optimism for the future made Ron Risley finish his degree in agriculture and go on to a graduate program in the same area.

Risley, from Campbell, New York, graduated from high school in 1973 and entered Cornell University to study animal science. He says he was not happy with where he was and what he was doing at Cornell, so he left school and went back to his father's dairy farm. After working at

home for 4 years and then taking a position with a farm in western Maryland, Risley entered the University of Maryland in 1983.

"I wanted to get out in the world more and deal with different types of people while still maintaining my ties to agriculture and especially the dairy industry," he said of his return to college. "It just seemed like the time to get off the farm and get back into school."

Risley switched to agricultural economics at Maryland and graduated in 1985 with highest honors—a perfect 4.0 grade point average. That 8-year vacation did him good, he says. He saw other sides of agriculture and was ready for new challenges. The New York native is currently on an assistantship at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in a master's degree program for dairy marketing. The farm economy may be discouraging at times, but Risley believes agriculture students who want a career in the industry can have one by broadening their horizons.

"I don't think you can ignore the economy right now," he says. "There are times when things look pretty bleak. But we have to attempt to broaden our horizons. In my case, that means taking more finance courses to develop some specialty. The bottom line is that I'm doing what I want to do—what I'm happiest doing—and that's being involved in agriculture and the dairy industry in some way."